

# Concerns in Utah about proposed Nevada power plant

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Posted: 1:49 PM- ST. GEORGE -- A power plant proposed in Nevada is getting attention in southwestern Utah.

More than 250 people attended a meeting to ask questions and express concerns about the Toquop Energy Project, a coal-fired plant 12 miles northwest of Mesquite, Nev.

"They want to build it in eastern Nevada for two reasons: water, and the environmental effects will be in Utah," said Charles Benjamin, a lawyer in the Nevada office of Western Resource Advocates, a watchdog group.

"If these things were on the west side of Las Vegas, it would be a lot harder for them to get it done," he said Tuesday.

Sithe Global Power chose the site partly because it carries fewer land-use restrictions, said Thomas Johns, senior vice president of development.

The fuel was switched to coal from natural gas because of cost, Johns said.

He said criticism from Utah residents was ironic because Utah gets much of its electricity from coal.

Gus Eghneim, an adviser to Sithe, acknowledged that coal plants create more emissions than ones that burn natural gas. He said the project would have the best technology to control emissions.

"The model is indicating that the impact would be insignificant," Eghneim said.

Casey DeMoss Roberts of St. George, executive director of Global Health Inc., said that's not enough to ensure health and safety.

"They're saying the impacts are negligible, but what if they're determined significant later?" Roberts said. "What do we do then?"

The environmental-impact statement is up for public review until Dec. 11, and comment is invited, said Bill Morrell of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

The power plant would be built on BLM land.